

# CHAPTER 3

## Customer Satisfaction

*“They made me feel like all was not lost and there was hope, I know now that I do have rights.”*

*Customer, 2002*

A customer satisfaction “snapshot survey” was conducted at all Family Law Information Center pilot locations during the time period from October 21, 2002, through December 31, 2002. The snapshot survey instrument is attached in Appendix F. The survey asked customers about their experience at the Family Law Information Center. Inquiry was made about what services were most helpful, what additional services they would like to see, and whether or not they had previously considered hiring an attorney or sought help from sources other than the Family Law Information Center. The total number of surveys returned was 1,364. There were 148 from Fresno County, 64 from Sutter County and 1,152 from Los Angeles County. Responses are set out below. Comparisons were made on the bases of gender and party status because these demographics were specifically mentioned in Family Code §15101(k) as being of interest to the Legislature. The Los Angeles center has also collected primarily narrative customer satisfaction information from its inception in June of 2000 until the present. Most of the quotations in the margins are derived from these Los Angeles County forms.

### CUSTOMERS BELIEVE THE ASSISTANCE THEY RECEIVED WAS HELPFUL

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	61%	31%		<1%	<1%		7%
Fresno n=148	85%	14%		<1%	0%		<1%
Sutter n=64	92%	3%		2%	0%		3%
Total N=1,364	65%	28%		<1%	<1%		6%

*“The Family Law Information Center staff person was very kind— she is very patient— there were many people and only her. Everyone left happy because she made all of us feel good, important and smarter.”*

*Customer, 2000*

93% OF ALL CUSTOMERS SURVEYED BELIEVE THE ASSISTANCE THEY RECEIVED WAS HELPFUL TO THEM.

*“The quality of service was professional and helpful. It helped me understand all of the steps I must take to accomplish what I need.”*

*Customer, 2002*

*“The staff person I worked with was very helpful and answered my questions! She was patient in hearing me out and walked me through what I needed to do. I honestly think you guys are doing a great job.”*

*Customer, 2002*

The Family Law Information Center customers who responded to the snapshot survey were overwhelmingly positive in their belief that the information they received was helpful to them.

In Fresno County, 99 percent of customers felt they had been helped. Women and petitioners were slightly more likely to feel strongly that the assistance they received was helpful.<sup>22</sup>

In Sutter County, 95 percent of Family Law Information Center customers felt that the assistance they received was helpful to them.

There was no significant difference in the Sutter County center between male and female customers in their belief that the assistance they received was helpful to them. Nor was there any significant difference between petitioners and respondents.

In the Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center, 92 percent of customers agreed that the assistance they received was helpful. The percentage that agreed “strongly,” however, was smaller than in the other two counties. This variance can probably be accounted for by the difference in the level of service provided. Staffs at both the Sutter and Fresno Family Law Information Centers actually help the customers fill out their forms. Forms assistance is provided both one-on-one and in workshop settings. The Los Angeles program, however, was designed to handle an enormous volume of people with a very small staff. They provide the forms with instructions and answer questions, but in most cases litigants are required to fill out their forms on their own. The Family Law Information Center will then go over their work if time permits. Documents are reviewed by staff in about 35 percent of the cases.<sup>23</sup>

In Los Angeles County, there were no significant differences between the men and women. Respondents felt somewhat more strongly that the assistance was helpful.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Significant at  $p \leq .05$

<sup>23</sup> Estimate by Linda Wright, Director, Los Angeles Family Law Information Center, January 14, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Significant at the  $p \leq .05$

**CUSTOMERS ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT AND COURTESY BY  
THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER STAFF**

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
<b>Los Angeles n=1,152</b>	64%	30%		<1%	<1%		5%
<b>Fresno n=148</b>	81%	19%		0%	0%		0%
<b>Sutter n=64</b>	89%	8%		0%	0%		3%
<b>Total N=1,364</b>	67%	28%		<1%	<1%		5%

The Family Law Information Center customers who responded to the snapshot survey were extremely positive in their feelings toward the centers' staff. Over 95 percent of customers felt well treated by the staff. In fact, the extent of regard for the Family Law Information Center staff was remarkable not just in the high scores given, but also in the narrative comments customers wrote onto their forms. Examples are set out as sidebars and are representative of literally thousands of such comments.

In Fresno County, 100 percent of respondents felt that the staff was courteous and respectful toward them. There was no significant difference between male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents in their responses

In Sutter County, the customers of the Family Law Information Center felt that they were well treated by the staff 97 percent of the time. There was no difference between the male and female customers, or those who were petitioners or respondents.

In Los Angeles County, 94 percent of customers felt well treated by the Family Law Information Center staff. This is particularly evident in the statements made by numerous customers on the local Los Angeles customer satisfaction questionnaires. There were no significant differences between male and female customers with respect to this question.

**95% of all customers surveyed report being treated with courtesy and respect.**

*"The first and only ray of hope in this entire building. The Family Law Information Center staff is really a blessing!! No one cares about anyone else—but they really do!!"*

*Customer, 2000*

*"The workers were very friendly and helpful – didn't make me feel like a bother."*

*Customer, 2000*

98% OF CUSTOMERS  
REPORT RECEIVING  
HELPFUL ASSISTANCE  
WITH THEIR FORMS.

*“I think the service is a great public service. The Family Law Information Center staff person had a thorough knowledge and understanding of forms, and a very pleasant attitude.”*

*Customer, 2002*

*“I think it is useful for those of us who are not familiar with the law proceedings and forms. Top of the line service.”*

*Customer, 2001*

Respondents were slightly more likely to feel strongly that they had been treated with respect and courtesy by the staff.<sup>25</sup>

#### CUSTOMERS RECEIVED HELPFUL ASSISTANCE COMPLETING THEIR FORMS

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
<b>Los Angeles n=1,152</b>	56%	34%		2%	<1%		8%
<b>Fresno n=148</b>	78%	18%		0%	0%		4%
<b>Sutter n=64</b>	84%	5%		6%	0%		5%
<b>Total N=1,364</b>	59%	31%		2%	<1%		8%

Customers were asked specifically if the assistance they received with respect to their forms was useful. The vast majority felt that the Family Law Information Centers provided useful forms assistance. Ninety-eight percent of respondents report receiving useful assistance with forms. The difference in responses between the Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center and the other two would again be accounted for by the difference in levels of service provided.

In Fresno County, there was no difference between male and female customers in the belief that the forms assistance they received was helpful. There was also no difference between petitioners and respondents.

In Sutter County, there were no differences between male and female customers or between petitioners and respondents in the belief that the forms assistance they received was useful.

In Los Angeles County, there were no differences between men and women with respect to their belief that the forms assistance was helpful. Respondents were slightly more likely to feel strongly that the forms assistance was helpful.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

<sup>26</sup> Significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

It is possible that respondents may feel that the forms assistance they receive is more complete, at least in the initial stages of the proceeding. Petitioners have numerous and complicated forms to prepare, while respondents are required to fill out fewer and less complicated sets of forms.

#### **CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND THEIR CASES AND/OR ISSUES BETTER**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>		<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>		<b>Missing</b>
<b>Los Angeles n=1,152</b>	43%	42%		4%	1%		10%
<b>Fresno n=148</b>	67%	33%		0%	0%		0%
<b>Sutter n=64</b>	77%	19%		1%	0%		3%
<b>Total N=1,364</b>	47%	40%		3%	1%		9%

Customers felt that they understood their cases, and/or the issues within their cases, better after receiving assistance from the Family Law Information Centers. Overall, 87 percent of customers felt they understood their cases better after coming to the Family Law Information Centers. The difference in responses between the Los Angeles Family Law Information Center and the other two could again be accounted for by the difference in levels of service.

In Fresno County, there were no differences between the male and female customers in the belief that they understood their cases and/or issues better after visiting the Family Law Information Center. There were also no differences between petitioners and respondents.

In Sutter County, there were no differences found between male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents.

In Los Angeles County, there were no differences found between male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents, in the belief that they understood their cases and/or issues better after receiving assistance from the center.

**87% OF CUSTOMERS FEEL THAT THEY UNDERSTAND THEIR CASES AND/OR ISSUES BETTER.**

*“She gave me the information I needed, even though I didn’t want to hear it...she is very good, but most of all honest!!”*  
Customer, 2000

*“I like that there is some place to go. The staff makes you feel very good and understand what you are doing.”*

*Customer, 2001*

82% OF CUSTOMERS FEEL BETTER PREPARED TO PRESENT THEIR CASE TO THE JUDGE.

*“It has been helpful and made me very successful with my case.”*

*Customer, 2002*

*“Answered all my questions and took a little of the stress out.”*

*Customer, 2002*

## CUSTOMERS FELT BETTER PREPARED TO PRESENT THEIR CASE TO THE JUDGE

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
<b>Los Angeles n=1,152</b>	38%	42%		7%	<1%	13%
<b>Fresno n=148</b>	53%	42%		3%	0%	2%
<b>Sutter n=64</b>	64%	24%		3%	0%	9%
<b>Total N=1,364</b>	42%	40%		6%	1%	11%

Customers felt that they were better prepared to present their case and/or issues to the judge after receiving assistance from the Family Law Information Centers. The information they received seems to help reduce the anxiety associated with going to court. While 82 percent of customers agreed that they felt better prepared for the judge, they did not feel as strongly about it as they did about the help they received with the forms and the basic procedural information. This likely indicates the anxiety individuals feel about actually appearing in court and having to speak in public to a judge about issues of enormous personal importance.

Nevertheless, in Fresno, 95 percent of customers agreed that they felt better prepared to present their cases to the judge after visiting the Family Law Information Center.

No differences were found between Fresno County male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents in the belief that they were better prepared to present their cases to the judge after visiting the Family Law Information Center.

The vast majority (88 percent) of Sutter County customers also agree that they felt better prepared to present their case to a judge after visiting the Family Law Information Center. No differences were found between Sutter County petitioners and respondents in the belief that they were better prepared to present their cases to the judge after visiting the Family Law Information Center. Female customers were slightly more

likely to feel strongly that they were better prepared for court.<sup>27</sup>

In Los Angeles County, 80 percent of customers agreed that they felt better prepared to present their cases to the judge. The percentage of those who felt strongly about this, however, was smaller than in the other two counties. Once again, this difference is likely to be attributable to the difference in levels of service provided..

In Los Angeles County, females felt slightly more strongly than males that they were better prepared for court.<sup>28</sup> There was no difference between petitioners and respondents.

#### CUSTOMERS FELT THEY UNDERSTOOD BETTER HOW THE COURT WORKS

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
<b>Los Angeles</b> <b>n=1,152</b>	36%	45%		7%	1%		11%
<b>Fresno</b> <b>n=148</b>	45%	49%		3%	0%		3%
<b>Sutter</b> <b>n=64</b>	64%	28%		2%	0%		6%
<b>Total</b> <b>N=1,364</b>	38%	45%		6%	1%		10%

The majority of customers (83 percent) felt that they had a better understanding of how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Centers. The responses to this inquiry were not as strong as they were to the question regarding customers' understanding of their own particular cases and issues. The information given by the Family Law Information Centers tends to be focused, specific, and practical. It relates principally to procedural issues, legal definitions, and options. It is not a primary purpose of the Family Law Information Centers to educate the public about court operations as a whole. Rather, the primary purpose is to

<sup>27</sup> Significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

<sup>28</sup> Significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

**83% OF CUSTOMERS  
REPORT THAT THEY HAVE  
A BETTER  
UNDERSTANDING OF HOW  
THE COURT WORKS.**

*"I am grateful that someone is  
able to help me understand  
the court process."*

*Customer, 2002*

*“It’s great help for people  
who don’t know the law.  
Great service!!”*

*Customer, 2002*

provide helpful, case-specific information to litigants without attorneys and assist them to move through the family justice system as efficiently as possible. Nevertheless, most customers felt that they had gained a better understanding of how the court works.

In Fresno County, 94 percent of customers agreed that they had a better understanding about how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Center. No differences were found between Fresno County male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents in the belief that they had gained a better understanding of how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Center.

In Sutter County, 92 percent of customers agreed that they had a better understanding about how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Center. No differences were found between Sutter County male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents in the belief that they had gained a better understanding of how the court works after visiting the center.

Although the Los Angeles customers did not respond as strongly to this inquiry, 81 percent of customers agreed that they had gained a better understanding of how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Center. Female customers were slightly more likely to feel strongly that they understood the court better.<sup>29</sup> There were no differences between petitioners and respondents.

#### **CUSTOMERS DID NOT HAVE TO WAIT TOO LONG**

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
<b>Los Angeles n=1,152</b>	39%	36%		11%	8%		6%
<b>Fresno n=148</b>	62%	36%		1%	1%		0%
<b>Sutter n=64</b>	72%	11%		14%	0%		3%
<b>Total N=1,364</b>	43%	35%		10%	7%		5%

<sup>29</sup> Significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

**78% REPORTED  
RECEIVING REASONABLY  
PROMPT SERVICE.**

*Customers frequently  
remarked that the Family  
Law Information Centers  
could use additional staff.*



The most frequent comment by customers about how the Family Law Information Centers might improve services was a suggestion to add more staff to answer questions. Having to wait for services was the largest source of complaint. The need for more staff was perceived as the reason that customers are required to wait for services longer than they would like. The length of time customers have to wait for services is more pronounced in the Sutter and Los Angeles County Family Law Information Centers. It appears that waiting is more problematic in these programs, where service is on a first-come-first-served basis, than in Fresno, where service is by appointment. Nevertheless, 78 percent report receiving prompt service.

In Fresno, the 98 percent of customers agreed that they did not have to wait long to receive services from the Family Law Information Center. There were no differences between male and female customers in Fresno, or between petitioners and respondents, with respect to how they felt about the length of time they waited for services.

In Sutter County, 83 percent of customer agreed that they did not have a long wait for assistance at the Family Law Information Center. A noteworthy minority (14 percent) felt that they had to wait a long time to be served. There were no differences between male and female customers in Sutter County, or between petitioners and respondents, with respect to how they felt about the length of time they waited for services.

Customers in Los Angeles County were the most likely to mention the need to improve the waiting time in the Family Law Information Centers. Nevertheless, 75 percent felt they had received prompt service given the level of observable resources. Comments about long waiting periods were most frequently accompanied by observations about the need for additional staff and praise for the existing staff for how well they cope with the enormous volume of people coming for help. In fact, the admiration for the staff is noteworthy in the narrative comments customers made about waiting time.

There were no differences between male and female customers in Los Angeles, or between petitioners and respondents, with respect to how they felt about the length of time they waited for services.

*“The staff person was very good—very professional—she had 12 people and she was very patient and everyone was happy.”*

*Customer, 2000*

*“Very knowledgeable in the midst of a large group.”*

*Customer, 2001*

92% OF CUSTOMERS  
WOULD RETURN TO THE  
FAMILY LAW  
INFORMATION CENTER IN  
THE FUTURE.

*“Despite my stress, I felt I could follow-up on procedures to divorce due to good explanations. Satisfied, will be using your services again in the future.”*

*Customer, 2001*

*“It is very important to maintain this service because it helps people be responsible for their children.”*

*Customer, 2002*

CUSTOMERS RATE  
PERSONAL CONTACT WITH  
STAFF AS MOST HELPFUL.

## CUSTOMERS WILL RETURN TO THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS IN THE FUTURE

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
<b>Los Angeles n=1,152</b>	60%	31%		1%	1%	7%
<b>Fresno n=148</b>	83%	16%		0%	0%	1%
<b>Sutter n=64</b>	92%	5%		0%	0%	3%
<b>Total N=1,364</b>	64%	28%		1%	1%	6%

Overall, 92 percent of customers report that they would use the services of the Family Law Information Center again in the future.

There were no differences between male and female customers in their willingness to use the services of the Family Law Information Center in the future.

There were no differences in Sutter County between petitioners and respondents with respect to their willingness to use the Family Law Information Center again in the future. In Fresno County, there were no differences between petitioners and respondents; however, females were more likely to say they would use the center again.<sup>30</sup> In Los Angeles County, respondents were more likely to report a willingness to return to the Family Law Information Center.<sup>31</sup>

## DIRECT ASSISTANCE FROM STAFF WAS THE MOST HELPFUL

Customers were asked which of the services they received at the Family Law Information Centers were the most helpful to them. In all locations, direct assistance from staff was reported to be the most helpful.

<sup>30</sup> Significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

<sup>31</sup> Significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

### What Type of Assistance Was Most Helpful

	Fresno	Sutter	Los Angeles
Staff to assist filling out forms	47%	31%	39%
Staff to answer procedural questions	42%	33%	22%
Forms packets w/written instructions	8%	8%	25%
Referrals to get help elsewhere	3%	8%	9%
Other information brochures	0%	9%	4%
Computer use	0%	1%	1%

*“The staff explained everything perfectly; first time I got to talk to someone this way at court.”*

*Customer, 2001*

### FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS COULD IMPROVE BY PROVIDING MORE STAFF TO ASSIST LITIGANTS AND HAVING SIMPLIFIED FORMS

Customers were asked how the Family Law Information Centers could improve their services to the public. Responses to this inquiry seem clearly related to the specific needs of the three programs. For example, in Sutter County, where the customer volume is the lowest, an increase in staff is not ranked as most urgently needed by the Family Law Information Center. The opposite is true of the Los Angeles County centers, where the number of people seeking help is overwhelming. In Sutter County, the focus of the customers is directed more toward the complicated nature of the required forms in family law. And Fresno customers, like those in Los Angeles, most frequently identify increasing staff as the way the center could improve services. Fresno customers' designations of needs, however, are more balanced among the various categories of possible improvements.

*“Very good they explained everything . . . they helped me and gave me hope to bring my family back together.”*

*Customer, 2001*

*“She [staff] knows how to help you. I was afraid until she talked to me.”*

*Customer, 2002*

CUSTOMERS CAN'T  
AFFORD LAWYERS.

*“They are vitally needed because many can't afford attorneys. It was very helpful. Gave me the vital information I needed to ensure proper completion of my papers.”*

*Customer, 2002*

### Best Way to Improve Service

	Fresno	Sutter	Los Angeles
More staff to help	22%	22%	47%
Simplified forms with instructions	13%	31%	14%
Help in more languages	17%	17%	4%
More information about other services	20%	9%	7%
Referrals to attorneys	13%	17%	8%
Provide services closer to home	12%	4%	13%
More website information	3%	0%	7%

### FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER CUSTOMERS CANNOT AFFORD ATTORNEYS

The majority of Family Law Information Center customers report that they have not considered hiring an attorney. In Fresno County this group makes up 77 percent of the customers; in Sutter County, 54 percent, and in Los Angeles County, 74 percent. Those customers were then asked why they had not considered hiring counsel.

### Reason for No Attorney Representation

	Fresno	Sutter	Los Angeles
Unable to afford	80%	79%	78%
Choose to represent self	8%	17%	13%
Don't know how to find an attorney	8%	2%	5%
Other	4%	2%	3%
Already have an attorney	0%	0%	1%

There was very little difference among the counties. Most Family Law Information Center customers felt they could not afford to hire an attorney.

#### **MANY CUSTOMERS HAD TRIED TO FIND HELP BEFORE COMING TO THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS**

A large percentage of Family Law Information Center customers had tried to find help prior to coming to these programs. In Fresno, 44 percent of the customers had tried to find help previously; in Sutter 52 percent had tried to find help; and in Los Angeles 55 percent had sought help elsewhere.

Those who sought help prior to coming to the Family Law Information Centers were asked where they had looked for assistance

#### **Previous Attempts to Get Help**

	<b>Fresno</b>	<b>Sutter</b>	<b>Los Angeles</b>
Friend/relative	27%	29%	19%
Private attorney	8%	21%	12%
Paralegal	19%	12%	9%
Legal Aid	6%	3%	18%
Family Law Facilitator	11%	5%	8%
Another self-help center	11%	3%	5%
Attorney referral	6%	3%	5%
Websites	5%	6%	9%
Self-help books	1%	9%	6%
Other	5%	9%	4%
Library	1%	0%	5%

A large percentage of customers indicated they had sought help from family and friends. Many had also tried to use self-

*"I think that your services provided are helpful especially to low income families."*  
Customer, 2001

**CUSTOMERS OFTEN  
HAD NOT FOUND HELP  
ANYWHERE ELSE.**

*"The only agency that has tried to help me, which I feel is fantastic."*  
Customer, 2001

*"I have been all over the county courthouse and the only help I received was from the Family Law Information Center. The court should have everybody explain things as clear as the person who helped me."*  
Customer, 2002

CUSTOMERS SEND THEIR  
FAMILIES AND FRIENDS  
TO THE CENTERS TO GET  
HELP.

help books. Others had tried to get help from a private attorney, legal aid or the family law facilitator.

### **CUSTOMERS HEAR ABOUT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS MOST FREQUENTLY FROM FRIENDS AND RELATIONS**

Interestingly, the largest percentage of customers report hearing about the Family Law Information Centers from friends and relatives. This piece of information suggests that news about the services of the Family Law Information Centers is spreading by word of mouth in the communities in which the centers work. Not surprisingly, the second largest numbers of customers were referred to the Family Law Information Centers by other court personnel. ■

#### **How Heard About Center**

	<b>Fresno</b>	<b>Sutter</b>	<b>Los Angeles</b>
Friend/relative	35%	31%	25%
Court personnel	15%	31%	24%
Other	16%	5%	15%
Other service agency	9%	14%	5%
Family Law Facilitator	9%	7%	5%
Legal Aid	5%	0%	10%
Used the center before	5%	5%	5%
Another self-help center	1%	2%	3%
Private attorney	2%	3%	1%
Websites	0%	2%	3%
Paralegal	3%	0%	1%
Library	0%	0%	3%

*“Excellent service, In fact, I already told friends about the excellent service and friendly people. Thank you so much!”*  
Customer, July 2002